



**Connecticut Farm Bureau Association**

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March 15, 2012

**Testimony in Support of:**

**Raised Bill No. 5410 AN ACT TRANSFERRING THE CONSERVATION FUNCTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

Submitted by: Donald Tuller, President, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association

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*The following testimony is submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Farm Bureau, a statewide nonprofit membership organization of over 5,000 families dedicated to farming and the future of Connecticut agriculture.*

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and Members of the Environment Committee:

We urge your support for Raised Bill 5410, returning the Conservation Functions currently under the jurisdiction of DEEP, back to the Department of Agriculture, where they originally resided. When DEP was formed, the conservation functions were transferred to the new department to give it some critical mass. Since that time, (as the current title demonstrates,) the Legislature has given that agency numerous regulatory responsibilities, which, at this point, are the main focus of the current DEEP. We would argue that, at this time, the Department of Agriculture could use the critical mass. Forestry is Agriculture, by definition, and in our opinion, there is a greater culture of managing working lands in the Department of Agriculture. There is a very interesting opportunity there for greater focus on sustainable management with positive impacts on our states economy. DEEP controls thousands of acres of prime and important farmland, that could also be managed with a greater emphasis on agriculture use. This would be a boost to Connecticut farmers, jobs, and the overall Connecticut economy. If you make this structural adjustment in these two governmental agencies, they will be able to focus on the things that are their strengths, and the overall result will be better for us all. In agriculture, as in many other areas, we find ourselves readopting ideas that we have employed previously. I like to refer to it as moving forward, into the past. This bill is a good example of that concept. We urge that you support Raised Bill 5410, An Act Transferring the Conservation Functions of DEEP To The DOA.

Thank you: Don Tuller President of the Connecticut Farm Bureau Association